

Epidemiology of Reported Hepatitis in Thailand 1993-2002

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Background: Hepatitis has been included in Thailand's national surveillance system since 1970. The system is strengthened periodically to serve the needs of disease prevention and control program. Before serologic testing was widely available, a case was diagnosed based only on clinical diagnosis. Hepatitis A, B, and non-A non-B have been reported since 1978. Reporting for hepatitis C, D, and E, began in 1999, 1997, and 1999, respectively. This report describes the 2002 distribution of hepatitis and the national trends during the past 10 years.

Methods: A standard disease notification report (Form 506) is used to collect demographic and epidemiological data. When a hepatitis case is diagnosed, Form 506 is completed and sent to district health office, provincial health office and eventually to Ministry of Public Health.

Result: In 2002, a total of 6,617 cases of hepatitis were reported for a rate of 10.6/100,000 population. Reported acute mortality was 0.15%. The male to female case ratio was 1.4:1, and the majority of cases (87.8%) were aged 15 years and older. The most frequently reported occupations were agriculture (31.9%) and laborers (24.7%). The incidence rates among the 4 regions, South, North, Central, and Northeast, were 13.1, 12.9, 11.4 and 7.5 per 100,000 population, respectively. Diagnosis of hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E was reported among 401, 2154, 276, 4, and 30 cases, respectively. The rest of the 3,752 (57%) cases were reported as unspecified. During 1993-2002, the incidence rate of hepatitis in Thailand decreased from 27.4/100,000 population in 1993 to 10.6 in 2002. The decline was observed in all age groups except for 5-14 year olds. Incidence of hepatitis B decreased from 4.4 in 1993 to 3.4 in 2002.

Discussion: Despite the availability of serologic testing in Thailand, most clinical cases of hepatitis are not routinely tested. Varying clinical case definitions may lead to misclassification of disease reports. Rates of hepatitis B have continued to decline after the introduction of the vaccine in infants in 1992.

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